

Daniqua Boulware
14 Read Street
New Haven, Connecticut 06411

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H.B. 5531 AN ACT CONCERNING THE CARE AND TREATMENT OF PERSON WITH A MENTAL
ILLNESS OR SUBSTANCE USE DISORDER

Senator Coleman, Representative Tong and respective members of the Judiciary Committee,

My name is Daniqua Boulware and I am a resident of New Haven, Connecticut. I am actively involved with Advocacy Unlimited, Inc., which is a statewide, peer-run, organization dedicated to improving the outcomes and well-being for individuals who experience mental health and co-occurring disorders.

I am here today to testify in opposition to H.B. 5531. The reason I am testifying is because I have recently identified what one may feel if treatment is forced upon them against their will and human ability to refuse treatment options presented upon ones search for support addressing mental health challenges. While I have never been placed in four-point restraints or forced to take medications, which I have always refused, I have recently felt limited in my options due to my new HuskyD insurance.

In my past, I have always been granted access to treatment options and providers of my choice such as private practice and independent licensed clinicians for behavioral health referrals, especially when I opted out of seeing a agency psychiatrist. I recently requested referrals from a past treatment agency for marijuana abuse and emotional disorders but was continuously linked back to The Connection, Inc. Finally, I decided to follow up with scheduling an appointment due to time constraints and active symptoms. I was not happy due to my familiarity with the agency as a professional social worker and therapist. Having active client's in the same vicinity was not comforting yet my only resource for relief.

I hesitantly moved forward only to be further disappointed by the informed consent and intake process. I was blatantly lied to and informed multiple times that my insurance dictated a treatment plan including seeing a psychiatrist for medication and attending individual and group therapy with case management support being optional. The provider was willing to expedite my number of appointments so that I could meet with the psychiatrist for an immediate prescription. Following multiple clear and concise statements to her against medication she finally stated that I could replace medication with double individual therapy appointments.

Since then, I have maintained an average of 1 weekly individual and group session without repercussion's from my health insurance or the agency. The fact that professionals can mislead consumers into consenting into treatment they are fully aware does not benefit or interests them is my main concern. Professional and legal permission to force treatment against the will of consumers is not in agreement with the code of ethics I graduated honoring and practicing nor something I would ever suggest supporting.

Eliminating the rights of humans to make informed consent for or against treatment options identified by inpatient or outpatient providers is a step in the wrong direction if our overall goal remains focused on improving the outcomes and well-being for humans experiencing mental health and/or substance use disorders.

Inviting legal conservators to force humans capable of seeking or refusing treatment options in the community seems like a burden waiting to happen. I personally imagine that this option will quickly become overly used in the hopes of sedating social issues instead of taking the time necessary to assess and develop a trusting working relationship and treatment plan based on a client-centered approach. Further assessments will surely lead to a more appropriate, comprehensive list of referrals for treatment and support options for individuals to consider.